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Sustainable Developments

The President's Council on Sustainable Development June 1995 #3

Vice President Al Gore Urges Innovative Recommendations

Vice President Al Gore, in his address to Council members during their meeting at the San Francisco Presidio, encouraged the PCSD to pursue bold and innovative recommendations for sustainable development. Vice President Gore said, "At it's heart, sustainable development is about preserving the opportunities for future generations, and, in part, boils down to what we are willing to invest in our future. How much are we willing to invest in education, in cleaner factories, in environmental cleanup, in affordable houses, and healthy communities? These questions are part of the effort to find a pattern of sustainable development."

"The creation of the PCSD is itself an investment, one that we expect to pay off in innovative economic and environmental policy recommendations," he told the gathering. "We've seen enough and heard enough from the members of the Council to believe very deeply you can do it...but building trust is the first step, and that's an essential role of this Council. We are convinced that this innovative program will yield significant cost savings and environmental gains today, while demonstrating how we can improve industrial performance in the future. It's the very essence of sustainable development."

As was made clear at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Gore said, "the environment and the economy must come together. It must be both, or it will be neither. **This Council is going that conclusion one better. It is about the environment, the economy, and people, and it is the most ambitious effort of its kind that I have seen anywhere in the world today."**

The Vice President said that, "if these issues were easy, the President would not need the Council on Sustainable Development. However, all of the Task Forces are grappling with complex, difficult issues that have polarized the discussions in the past...it's difficult, hard work, but essential and extremely timely. President Clinton and I are very grateful for the work of the Council. We believe sincerely that through your efforts, we can build the kind of trust that will allow us to join together in support of bold initiatives to move us along the path of sustainable development for our children and for future generations."

Vice President Al Gore

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Message from the Executive Director — San Francisco Meeting

The President's Council on Sustainable Development (PCSD) met on April 27-28, 1995, at the Presidio in San Francisco. The Council chose the Presidio as the site for this meeting because it is an example of leadership and vision in establishing a sustainable future for this nation. The Presidio is the largest expanse of urban open space managed by the National Park Service — nearly 1,500 acres of land that, until recently, was a military base. It is also an outstanding example of sustainable land reuse and ecosystem management.

This innovative site will house a community of future-oriented institutions focusing on some of the world's most critical social, cultural, and environmental challenges. At the same time, the Presidio's historical and natural resources will present a living textbook with which visitors can learn about sustainability.

The Council members were delighted to welcome Vice President Al Gore to their meeting in San Francisco. His steadfast support for both the PCSD and the Presidio was highlighted by his announcement that the Defense Department allocated $64 million to assist the Presidio with its environmental cleanup process, the building of infrastructure for public and private use, and the preparation of the Presidio for its role as a model of environmental education and sustainable development.

Several events were held at the Presidio in conjunction with the Council meeting. The Presidio Conference, sponsored by the Environmental Policy Center, brought together more than 200 leaders from business, government, community, and environmental organizations to provide input for the PCSD report and begin a five-year exchange of ideas and support for the principles of sustainability. In addition, the Council hosted two public roundtables focusing on Religion and Sustainable Development and Local, County, and State Government. Three Task Forces also held roundtables on Youth and Sustainable Communities, Global Sustainability, and Jobs, Labor, and Sustainability.

The Council is pleased with the success of its out-of-town meetings. They provided Council members an opportunity to gain insight from people working at the grassroots level and see first-hand examples of innovative sustainable development efforts going on around the country. The PCSD will convene in Washington, D.C., on June 28 to discuss the key elements of the *draft* report, and this material will be released for public comment this summer. The Council hopes as many people as possible will take the time to respond to our work. Your feedback is important to building a sustainable future.

The PCSD Hosts Roundtables to Inspire Discussion with Religious, Government, Labor and Small Business, and Youth Sectors

Roundtable on Religion and Sustainable Development

Paul Gorman

The PCSD hosted a roundtable on Religion and Sustainable Development at which many religious leaders gathered to share their efforts and concerns about the need for a sustainable future. According to Paul Gorman, executive director of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, the religious narrative concept on natural resources says,"God made the Earth, made it beautiful, made it with love, declared it to be good, and called on us to cherish and care for it. This did not start from Earth Day."

According to *U.S. News & World Report*, 95% of us believe in God or a Universal Spirit; more than 80% believe the Bible is the inspired word of God; 76% believe God hears prayer; 60% regularly attend services; and there are more houses of worship per capita in this country than in any nation on the planet — one for every 900 Americans.

"At the same time," Gorman continued, "people of faith overconsume, waste, pollute, ignore injustice or perpetrate it, enact crimes of violence, and neglect or abuse children. We are not anybody special. We are not an interest group. I am not Mr. Religion and you are not the Council on Secular Development. I know that many of you have rich faith lives of your own, so I would like to destroy any pretense to self-righteousness. We know who we are and we know who we are not."

Roundtable on Local, County, and State Government

Another highlight of the PCSD meeting in San Francisco was a Local, County, and State Government roundtable sponsored by the Sustainable Communities Task Force. The roundtable served as an effective vehicle for exploring the views, experiences, and recommendations of both elected officials and staff of a variety of national associations that represent elected officials. It is at the community level where leadership on sustainable development efforts is strongest and can provide the impetus for nationwide change.

Thoughtful discussion focused on a number of overarching municipal, county, and statewide interests and issues of concern, which reflected specific issues the Task Force has grappled with since the policy development process began. Kent Simms, director of Economic Development for the City of San Francisco, addressed land use and urban sprawl as one of the Bay Area's most significant sustainability issues. He noted while the city is densely populated, it has the highest number of greenspace acres of any urban area in the country. However, development has posed some significant threats to the environment.

Both to deal with these environmental concerns and meet the needs of area residents, the local government instituted a multi-billion dollar clean water program, the second most-used transit system in the nation, and a successful waste management program, Simms said. These programs provide great benefits, but are expensive and put the San Francisco government under financial stress. While San Francisco is the economic hub of the entire Bay Area and surrounding regions, he told roundtable participants, it does not reap the financial benefits from those outerlying areas. To address this problem, Simms emphasized the need for cooperation among communities within regions.

Marion County, near Portland, Oregon, is considered an urban area; however, it is also home to the largest agricultural production in the state. Mary Pearmine, chair of the Marion County Commission, focused her remarks on the struggle for sustainability between urban and rural communities. She said this 30-year struggle to reach sustainability goals has enabled communities to identify the need for:

- Recognition and affirmation of local sustainability projects;
- A framework for communities on which to build local designs;
- An understanding that the function of sustainability varies from community to community;
- Recognition that designs for community sustainability should be both defined and created locally; and
- Involvement by the federal government is necessary to work with communities to define strategies for how to achieve sustainability.

There will be a second multi-level government roundtable prior to the Council meeting in Washington, D.C., on June 27, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM.

Roundtable on Jobs, Labor, and Sustainability

In San Francisco, the Public Linkage Task Force held its third Jobs, Labor, and Sustainability roundtable during which participants grappled with how to provide young people with the appropriate education and training to make them eligible in the future for quality jobs that provide benefits and liveable wages. One participant stressed the importance of solid school-to-work transition programs, specifically what needs to be taught in schools to provide students incentives to be self-supporting in an adult society and how society can create quality jobs that youth will be motivated to pursue.

In addition, small business owners and managers voiced concerns that, while they are eager to serve their communities by creating new employment opportunities, they cannot do so without access to additional funding. Roundtable participants included labor leaders, health professionals, professors, and small business owners.

Youth Summit for Sustainable Communities

The Sustainable Communities Task Force joined the Public Linkage Task Force to cosponsor a Youth Summit for Sustainable Communities prior to the full Council meeting at the Presidio in April. This public meeting, which focused on sustainability issues specific to the Bay Area, provided a forum for leaders of various youth organizations working on issues such as homelessness, health care, and jobs training to make connections with one another.

In addition, representatives from the business schools of both Stanford University and UC Berkeley attended the roundtable to discuss changes in their educational systems, which are expanding to include environmental awareness and sustainable communities studies. An Americorps representative discussed how local sustainable communities programs and initiatives are being carried out through its national programs.

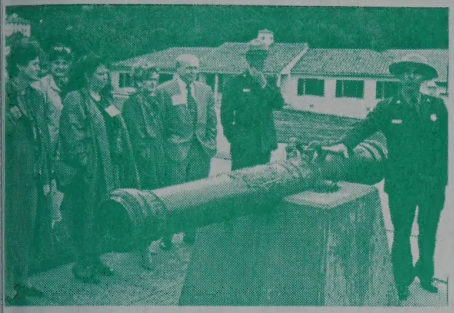
Highlights from PCSD Task Forces

Eco-Efficiency

The Eco-Efficiency Task Force policy recommendations are based on observations drawn from a number of demonstration projects, including eco-industrial park projects, lithographic printers and other small businesses, an automobile assembly plant, the commercial cleaning products industry, and chemical operations. These projects enabled Task Force members to observe real-life issues affecting all participants within the chain of commerce, from producers of raw materials to manufacturers to consumers.

Some of the most compelling findings suggest the need for systematic changes in the federal regulatory process and the importance of shared responsibility for pollution prevention within the chain of commerce. The Environmental Management System (EMS) is one of the Task Force's *draft* recommendations. It would mean overhauling the environmental regulatory process that has served the country well for the past 25 years, but now needs improvement. "Command-and-control" regulations, which focus on environmental protection on an issue-by-issue basis, such as clean water, clean air, and Superfund, have been successful up to this point. But environmental protection could be strengthened and be more efficient if the focus were on solving problems at their genesis, according to the approach embodied in this recommendation.

The EMS approach is characterized by long-term performance goals, rather than technology-based regulations. It would create a more flexible system by which



Council members and liaisons tour the Presidio

manufacturing facilities would have to meet certain pollution prevention standards, but need not all follow the same processes to reach those goals. Manufacturers would be required to achieve the appropriate pollution prevention standards, which would be enforceable, and the information would be made available both to regulatory agencies and the public.

The Task Force *draft* recommendation on the principles of Extended Product Responsibility offers a way to improve the current piecemeal approach to waste reduction, resource conservation, and pollution prevention. It would establish a shared responsibility within the chain of commerce that ensures designers, suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, consumers, and disposers all take responsibility for a product's environmental impact.

The intended result of this recommendation would be eventually to identify and encourage those within in the chain of commerce to take voluntary approaches to sharing responsibility for the environmental effects along the waste stream. If progress in this direction is not made within three to five years, a regulatory agency would take a more mandatory approach to ensure compliance with this method of environmental stewardship.

Energy and Tansportation

The Energy and Transportation Task Force conducted the Scenarios Project to gain a clearer picture of where the energy and transportation sectors are currently heading and what policies could contribute to and facilitate a more sustainable energy and transportation future. The Task Force members outlined four plausible paths, or scenarios, that sectors make take by the year 2025 and came to the following conclusions:

- Despite measurable progress in enhancing environmental quality, some current trends are unsustainable and changes will be necessary to shift toward a more sustainable future;
- A desire to achieve greater social equity will change the nature of environmental protection and possibly constrain some options;
- There is value in preparing policies to avert or adapt to a potential ecological crisis; and
- Rapid technological advances may help achieve economic aspirations and ecological goals, but may not by themselves adequately address equity concerns.

Technology both causes and provides solutions to the barriers on the path to a sustainable future. It is important to focus on both how quickly more energy-efficient, pollution preventative technologies are developed and how rapidly the cleaner technologies are put to everyday use. There is an opportunity for the federal government to implement tax code changes to provide incentives that pull the energy and transportation sectors toward specific sustainability goals.

One of the Task Force's most compelling *draft* policy recommendations would urge the federal government to pursue a policy of accelerated tax depreciation for U.S. electrical generators that encourages the replacement of inefficient power plants with investments in more sustainable energy technologies. Incentives should be linked to the efficiency of the new generation investments and lead to retiring or replacing approximately 100 gigawatts of the most inefficient infrastructure.

Although plants built before 1960 use much less resource-efficient technologies than facilities built today, many utilities are not retiring them because they are valuable as backups and for use during times of high demand in the summer and winter months. Tax incentives targeted at efficient and renewable electricity generation technologies could accelerate the decision to retire inefficient facilities and shift new investments to these more sustainable technologies. Investments in energy conservation would have the most economic and environmental benefits by reducing the need for electricity. In addition, technologies that rely on the abundance of U.S. renewable energy resources, including wind, photovoltaic, solar thermal, geothermal, and biomass, are becoming commercially more competitive with and generally have fewer environmental impacts than fossil fuels and other traditional power sources.

The PCSD Members

The PCSD consists of 25 leaders from industry, government, and environmental, labor, and civil rights organizations. A network of more than 450 liaisons and additional members assists the Council members in their work. The goal of the PCSD is to move the nation toward sustainability today, tomorrow, and in the future.

Co-Chairs:

David T. Buzzelli, Vice President & Corporate Director, The Dow Chemical Company
Jonathan Lash, President, World Resources Institute

Members:

John H. Adams, Executive Director, Natural Resources Defense Council
Bruce Babbitt, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
Richard Barth, Chairman, President & CEO, Ciba-Geigy Corporation
Ronald H. Brown, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce
Carol M. Browner, Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., Environmental Justice Advocate
Richard A. Clarke, Chairman & CEO, Pacific Gas & Electric Company
A.D. "Pete" Correll, Chairman & CEO, Georgia-Pacific Corporation
Kenneth T. Derr, Chairman & CEO, Chevron Corporation
Dianne Dillon-Ridgley, Co-Chair, Citizens' Network for Sustainable Development
Thomas Donahue, Secretary-Treasurer, AFL-CIO
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John C. Sawhill, President & CEO, The Nature Conservancy
Theodore Strong, Executive Director, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

Ex-Officio Members:

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Madeleine M. Kunin, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Education
Richard Rominger, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Timothy E. Wirth, Under Secretary for Global Affairs, Department of State

Executive Director:

Molly Harriss Olson

Public Linkage

Council members L-R: Ted Strong, Dianne Dillon-Ridgley, Fred Krupp, Carol Browner

The Public Linkage Task Force presented 11 education and outreach policies during the Council meeting in April, kicking off the policy discussion and highlighting the theme for the meeting, "Educating for Sustainability." Response to the Task Force policies, which look beyond incremental education reforms and focus on holistic lifelong learning that emphasizes relationships with the environment and community, was favorable. A number of Council members remarked that these policies highlight the essential role of education and public dialogue in helping to create a sustainable world.

In an Education Working Group meeting held at the Presidio, Task Force members discussed implementation strategies with Jean Perras, director of Learning for a Sustainable Future, a Canadian-based initiative working to bring sustainable development into school curricula. By forming a partnership with this international initiative, the Working Group hopes to strengthen its own implementation

plans, which include developing a blueprint, based on the Task Force policies, to detail the partnerships needed to ensure that successful sustainable development programs are instituted in communities throughout the nation.

Population and Consumption

The Population and Consumption Task Force held three roundtables in Washington, D.C., New York, and Chattanooga, to hear from experts around the country, including Jennifer Day of the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Dr. Susan Martin of the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, and Robert Williams of the Center for Energy and Environmental Studies at Princeton University. Roundtable participants discussed in depth current and projected future trends in population and consumption within the United States.

Highlighted during the roundtable on consumption in Chattanooga was a program instituted by Bank of America, one of the nation's largest banking institutions, to address excessive consumption issues inherent to a large service corporation. A representative from Bank of America discussed how a corporate culture can facilitate changes in the procurement of supplies and paper to avoid waste and transform a corporation with numerous departments using a wide variety of paper types into one that promotes consistency across departments.

Sustainable Communities

The Sustainable Communities Task Force worked with communities throughout the country to develop case study reports that draw on the expertise and lessons learned from leaders involved in local sustainable development initiatives. Each case study location demonstrated that success in achieving sustainability at the local level is based on active community participation in the overall process, which includes opportunities for voicing concerns, and strong partnerships among a wide variety of community sectors.

The Task Force selected the case study locations to offer a range of situations and insights for developing recommendations. The locations were both geographically and demographically diverse and reflected a broad scope of circumstances and issues. As a result, the final Task Force report will include menus of opportunities for communities to consider for moving into the next century in a more sustainable fashion and will provide examples to illustrate how some policy recommendations are being successfully implemented elsewhere in the country.

Council Meetings

The President's Council on Sustainable Development has met quarterly over the last two years. The 1993 meetings were held here in Washington, D.C. During 1994, the Council met in Seattle in January, Chicago in July, and Washington, D.C. in April and October. The Council met in January 1995 in Chattanooga and in San Francisco in April 1995. It will hold its next meeting in Washington, D.C. on June 28. Elements of the *draft* final report will be released for public comment this summer, and the final report to the President is planned for release in November 1995.

- **Call for an information packet about the PCSD and to place your name and address on our mailing list: (202) 408-5296**
- **Send your ideas and comments to the PCSD!**

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